

To Have and to Hold by goresmores

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Summary:

Richie's heat has been due to come for awhile, and Stan's going into rut right along with him. ft. Stan smoking a post-coital cigarette while thinking about his feelings for his omega and the future of their relationship.

To Have and to Hold

Bev was giving him a look from across the table. Stan blinked once at her before giving a sideways glance to Richie, whose face was buried in his neck and nuzzling him slowly, content as a fucking cat. He tried to look apologetic, but truthfully, this was the first time since they'd started dating that their heat and rut were coinciding, so all he could focus on was the contentedness at showing off his omega's need for him in public, and the mounting possessiveness as that was beginning to wear off.

Look at how much my omega wants me—now remember that he's mine. You can't have him.

"Rich, you know I love you like this, but scenting me at Bill and Eddie's wedding reception isn't a good look for us."

"Don't care," Richie mumbled. No doubt he was caught in a mental haze. He had to be, because it was a fruitless effort if he was going for scent. They'd had to load up on blockers periodically to keep from choking everyone else out on pre-heat and rut scent.

Bev chuckled from across the table and sipped her champagne. "Wow, he's real far gone, huh?"

The thing about their situation is that everyone knew it was coming. Richie's heat had been due to come around this time for a year now, but the wedding date being what it was going to be was unavoidable. The best anyone could hope for was that his preheat would last through the actual wedding, because while the reception was important, it wasn't the ceremonial part of the process. It wouldn't have been the same without Richie there to whoop and holler and catcall during their kiss.

Of course, both of their friends had flipped him off, and Stan was pretty sure the wedding photographer had taken a photo of them flipping his boyfriend the bird. Stanley needed copies of that.

"Unfortunately that makes two of us."

Bev shrugged, "You lasted about halfway through the reception, so props to you guys. I'll fill everyone in for you."

Stanley stood and Richie whined dramatically as his chin slipped from his shoulder, to which Stan rolled his eyes. "Don't whine, Richie."

"You're terrible," Richie declared, forehead on the table, "An awful alpha. I hate you so much. You wouldn't even let me drink."

Stan ignored him as he tugged him up by his wrist, attention on Bev, "Tell them I want photos of them flipping this shithead off, if the photographer has any."

Beverly saluted him, "Yessir. Onward with your omega crew, Captain."

"Please. You sound like Richie."

An arm slung around his waist and Richie shot her finger guns. "That's my girl."

"You're making me regret it, Rich."

"Aw don't be like that, babe."

Beverly made a fake retching noise, "Go 'babe' Stanley, Trashmouth."

Apparently this was a great idea, because Richie tilted his head towards Stan and said, "Babe? Babe? Baby?" He completed this with questioning kissy sounds.

"Definitely time to go. Thanks Beverly. Enjoy the rest of the night." He put a hand to Richie's lower back in an attempt to guide him in the right direction, but Richie still had to give his own eccentric goodbye before he allowed himself to go anywhere.

It was a short trip out of the banquet hall filled with goodbyes and awkward waving as they tried to escape, and then they were out in the hallway where the bar was.

"Stan—"

"Nope." He lowered his voice to avoid attracting the attention of the few people ordering drinks. "You're practically in heat why are you trying to convince me to let you drink?"

Richie shrugged, pathetically sullen.

Exasperated was far from what Stanley expected to be in a scenario like this, but that was part of the experience when it came to Richie. It wasn't something that had changed much in the last ten years, so Stan didn't expect the last year and a half of their relationship to make any improvements on that front.

The reminder that they'd been best friends for almost twelve years now made something sentimental and affectionate well up in Stan's chest, and he led Richie up the stairs to their room. He unlocked the door and nudged Richie through the threshold. "Get undressed."

"Oh, kinky." Which was the farthest thing from kinky between them, but Richie was being Richie. "D'ya like me naked, Stanny?"

"I like you quiet and obedient," he replied, not entirely dismissively.

"Boy, you really struck out with me, huh?" Which was a joke, but was frequently a point of concern for Richie when he was in his lows. He was sliding his blazer off, but now Stanley felt the urge to comfort him.

He locked the door and turned around as Richie was stepping out of his pants. "It's almost been twelve years."

Richie's efforts to unbutton his dress shirt slowed. "Yeah, I know." His voice was solemn, "I think about it a lot."

"You know I love you?"

"Yeah." Still solemn, but with a smile now, "I think about that a lot too."

Stan's smile in response was soft, and he checked his watch. "Decent timing. The blockers wear off in eleven minutes. Then we can actually scent each other."

Richie slipped his shirt off of his shoulders, exposing his newly tanned torso, with his few moles and lack of distinct muscle. He was finally starting to fill out some, even if he was still so tall and thin. Stan took a moment to drink him in.

Richie noticed this and puffed up, "And *you* kept making fun of me for insisting that I needed to tan while Summer was still around."

They'd had this conversation before, but Richie liked to remind Stan every now and again that he was right in the end. That tan suited him, and it was worth every obnoxious joke and comment related to the topic. Stan didn't really like having it rubbed in his face, though. He could live without that.

"You could have just gone to a tanning booth."

The offense was immediate. "Ex-CUSE me. I think the fuck not! You want me to strut into a tanning salon like a Jersey Shore sweetheart? I make jokes about people who go to tanning salons for a *living*, Stanley. And—not to sound like Eddie—but do you know how easy it is to die in one of those things? Very, if you're high profile like me."

Stan rolled his eyes as he took off his own shirt and tie. "You're not 'high profile.' You've got at least a few more years before you're going to be on Netflix's radar."

"Because I love you, I'm going to pretend you don't think I'm a tanning booth nobody, and I'm going to lay down on our bed now." And he did, starfishing out on the king-size mattress and staring up at the ceiling. He'd already made a nest out of the pillows and blankets the night before, driven by his instincts to get comfortable and make it his own space before he clung to Stan as they fell asleep. He was frantic when they first got into the room, because it was scentless and neat to the typical standard of a hotel room, which was unacceptable to Richie who lived in a relative mess. 'Relative' being because Stan had started whipping him into shape the second they'd moved in together, but he was allowed a certain level of leniency—only as long as it was contained to his side of the room.

Boundaries are important in a relationship, Stanny. I can dig it. No problemo. I'll even take the right side so the path to the door will be clear

for you. Or so he had said. Stan's eye had twitched at the implication that Richie would ever allow a room to become so messy that he wouldn't have easy access to the door and Richie had to clarify that he was 100% joking. Never. Never in my life. I had a girlfriend like that, y'know. Back in college? Thank God dropping out gave me a good excuse to end it because I think she's was nutso enough that she probably would have taken one of her stray dirty socks, shoved it in my mouth and kept me hostage if I'd tried to end it and hung around afterwards. 'Michelle the Mess' was fuckin' A.

Stan took his time folding his clothes so that he could set them aside neatly as he undressed, and by the time he joined Richie in just his briefs, the countdown was over. Eleven minutes come and gone, and the beginning of his boyfriend's scent finally peeking out from behind the void of nothing.

Richie looked up at him and Stan reached for his contact case when he realized what was missing. "Take them out."

"You want to fuck me blind?"

"No, but when I fuck you senseless you're gonna fall asleep with them in and complain about them when you wake up. So take them out."

"God, okay," he said, taking the case, "Hand me my glasses for after?"

Stan had to get out of bed for that, but it was worth it once Richie was wearing them. Or well, mostly worth it, because as soon as he slid them on he groaned and said, "These rims are thicker than your cock."

"I hate that. Never say that again. Stick to oatmeal or something."

Richie started cutting up beside him, laughing through asking, "Thicker than my ass?"

"I don't like that either."

"C'mon Stan, you love me but you can admit it. I'm flat as a board. If I was a pirate, I'd be Plank Butt the Beardless."

Stan gave a slight laugh, "Wooden ass."

"Not the point of the joke, but I'll take it. That's the spirit!"

"Splinter Dick the Jew."

"Wh—" A laugh burst out of Richie and he reached for Stan to pull him close as they both lost it.

By the end, Richie had his arms wrapped around Stan's middle, while Stan cradled the back of his neck with one hand, his thumb rubbing against the scent gland there. The skin-to-skin contact was good for them, but it was also enough to already have the both of them growing hard, and his ministrations on the other's neck wasn't doing Richie any real favors on the horny front.

He reached for Richie's wrist and rubbed his thumb over the scent gland there. Richie shuddered against him and his hips jerked forward, "Stan..."

"Mhm?" He hummed, guiding the wrist to his mouth so he could lave his tongue over it. Richie's breath hitched in his throat and he breathed out in stuttering bursts. His hips sped up and Stan felt goosebumps break out across his skin as excitement and anticipation rushed through him all at once.

Richie's face was hot against his skin, and Stan knew his heat had set in just like his rut had. "Richie, stop."

"Nooo, let me *come*," he whined, his voice deep and pitching upwards to something lighter as he emphasized what he wanted. Stan felt the thrill of competition soar in his veins. Richie always got brattier during his heat, and while he always liked it rough, it reached a new high during. Usually it was an entertaining challenge for a few days, but *this* time he could feel it was going to be different.

Entertaining, always, but in a primal and way that was otherwise controlled. The alpha in him sung at being challenged, and Richie wanted to do what he wanted to do, no questions asked. He sometimes thrived on being difficult in bed because it was his only real chance to be in the face of being beeped by everyone and the mounting professional aspect of his job. He wasn't perfect when it came to 'professional', seeing as he was still Trashmouth, but he was

getting a little bit better.

A little bit. The bare minimum of better possible, if you ask Stan. But hey, it was progress, and he was proud of Richie for all of the things he'd managed to achieve since he'd really delved headfirst into his comedy career.

Stan extricated himself from Richie and pinned his hips with his hands. "I said stop."

Richie pushed his hands off and tried to pull him down, "And I said *no*."

Smirking, Stan gave himself more leverage by adjusting the position of his knees and held Richie's hands down with one of his own. He shoved his face into Richie's neck to breathe in the natural scent of vanilla and cashmere, which was tainted with nicotine. Stanley hummed as Richie squirmed, "Don't you want to be a good boy, Richie?"

Richie hummed and then snorted, "Don't you wanna go fuck yourself, Stanley?"

He resisted the temptation to make an obvious comeback and teased at Richie's neck gland with light grazes of teeth. Richie cursed at the sensation and bucked his hips up, chasing pleasure that he wasn't going to get, because Stan was keeping anything friction-worthy out of his reach.

"I'm gonna kill you, Stan." He declared, glaring as his cock twitched in his briefs. His glare meant little when Stan knew that he was in control, not to mention the growing wet spot where the tip of Richie's cock was. "You better pray to your Jew God that the photographer got pictures of you so that everyone can remember you on your last day."

Stan dragged his nails down Richie's sides, and the omega hissed, squirming in part from the slight tickle and mostly because of the pain. "I think I'll be fine."

Richie proved him wrong, though, because he wrapped his thighs

around Stanley's hips and used the weight of his body to flip them. "I had to help Eddie get into shape for the wedding. Remember how I told you I'd convinced him to try wrestling? Terrible idea, he doesn't like getting hurt, but it paid off for me."

"I remember you telling me literally everything about your sessions with Eddie."

"Yeah, but show-and-tell has two parts." He winked and pulled Stan's briefs down. "Don't bother flipping us again." He grabbed one of the pillows to shove under Stan's hips. The alpha in him flared up, wanting to dominate and not appreciating the deviation from what had been the expected course of action, but the rest of what was all a Logical Stan was curious.

"Give me the word, Stan the Man. Quick bottoming with my slick? Yes or no? I know I said don't bother flipping us, but we're gonna need the pillow regardless of who's taking it."

His cock twitched at the thought, "Sure."

"Well," Richie started, taking a pause to lift himself and start pulling off his own briefs, "That's about as enthusiastic as it gets." Which was a truthful statement, because Stan had a reputation for his composed consent.

"I'm sorry, did you want me to whine and beg like they do in all the shitty porn you watch?"

Richie threw them across the room and put his hands on his hips. "Would it kill you? It's better than your monologuing," he said, his arm reaching behind so that he could start fingering himself.

"I don't monologue during sex!"

"No, right, of course not—Jesus it's hard to talk and finger—you don't monologue during sex. When you got the job is Georgia you 100% did not monologue about accounting before you fucked me. You don't monologue during *sex*, but *foreplay*? Well—"

Stan flushed. "Once. I monologued *once*."

The conversation died as Richie had to put all of his focus towards getting his slick-coated fingers out of his ass and into Stan's, but once he had one in, he continued. "We fuck when you're frustrated sometimes. Do you know how often you're frustrated? 'Kathy from work wouldn't know shit in a sewer if she saw it,' you said. That was hot." Richie brushed his prostate and Stan bit his lip, suppressing a noise in his throat and breathing out through his nose.

No comment.

"The senior financial account's desk is so covered in trash it's a miracle he can see the accounts past the wrappers, scraps and coffee stains.' That was a fun one, actually. You bit the inside of my thigh and I was horny for like, a week straight just getting up to walk around."

Richie added a second finger, the haze from before making a reappearance now. His words were spoken slower and more deliberately, and his eyes had a faraway look. "I'm like, 80% sure the only reason you don't monologue *during* is because you grunt like a funky little animal when you thrust. Eyes solely on the prize. Dick in, thoughts out—there is only the need to nut now."

Stan threw his forearm over his eyes, "Why the fuck would you say that to me?"

Richie started scissoring, "No, don't get me wrong! It's hot! Especially when I'm in heat." He went quiet again as he fingered more of his own slick into Stan and eventually he pulled his fingers out, "You ready, Stan?"

He nodded, more than eager for Richie to fuck him.

When Richie finally entered him, he had to take a moment with his cheek pressed against Stan's chest. "Sorry, Staniel. I don't think I'm as here as I sound."

"It's okay. I want you to fuck me like you really want it."

"Fuck you like you fuck me."

"Or something," Stan goaded, wanting Richie to move but not willing

to sacrifice his pride and get things moving himself.

Richie didn't say anything in response, just got his hips started and fucked into Stanley in earnest. He wasn't going to last long, which was entirely his own fault. He'd got himself worked up by frotting against Stan's leg, and now he was fucking as fast as he could.

"Gonna—fuck—gonna fill you up with my come and then let you fuck me right after, while I'm dripping out of you. You get to plug me up, but you'll be wide open and when your knot deflates we'll both be leaking out of each other and that's so hot, Stan. So hot. Wanna finger it back inside of you and do it all over again."

Stan groaned, grinding back against Richie as he let the words and the vivid mental image wash over him. "C'mon, come Rich. The sooner you do, the sooner you can see it."

"Shit! Wanna—just..." It took a few more thrusts before he was blowing his load, and pulling out to take a look.

Stan was impatient, though, and he urged Richie over the side so that he could roll over and press in. He groaned at the same time that Richie did. "I can feel it, Rich."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah. Love how much you wanna claim me in as many ways as you can." Which held the unspoken implication that this was one of Richie's versions of a mating bite. Despite Stan bringing it up, Richie held onto his beliefs that marriage was just a complicated version of dating because you got the government involved. Why do that when you could buy a stupid ring, hold a ceremony at your house with your friends and tell everyone you're married?

Stan's argument was: if you're going to have a wedding, why not just actually get married? Richie's only rebuttal was "paperwork", but Stan got the feeling that there was more to it than he was willing to say, which hurt, but he got over it.

It wasn't hard to guess that Richie probably had reservations about commitment, but he wasn't shy about finding other ways to show he

meant it when he said he loved Stan. Ways that didn't cross his own boundary of comfort. Ways like fucking his own load into his boyfriend and then taking his dick immediately after just for the filthy sense of solidarity and mutual ownership.

Richie may not be traditional, but he sure as hell was inventive. And loud. God, he was loud sometimes. *Like a funky little animal* he thought, and Stan caught himself genuinely grunting the way that Richie had said he did. He tried to focus on quieting himself, despite Richie saying he liked it because... well, it was embarrassing.

"Love you, Stan," he panted, "Love you so much. Love it when you fuck me and knot me and kiss me."

Stanley growled, thrusting in harder at the dirty talk and relishing in the breathless curse Richie let out. He shoved their mouths together and let Richie's tongue find its way into his mouth so that way he could suck and teasingly bite it.

Fuck it, he didn't need to worry about his sex grunts right now. Richie's come was leaking out exactly like he'd wanted, and it made Stan speed up to see if he couldn't get more out. The feeling of it sliding out and down his taint was filthy and fueled his desire to fill Richie up like never before. He cursed when his knot caught on Richie's rim as he was pulling out, slowing his thrusts to a satisfying grind. His knot had started swelling and he was coming, filling Richie with a breathless string of 'fuck' as he rode the wave of pleasure.

His grip was bruising and Richie clung back just as tight. "Slap me, slap me, slap me, please, alpha."

Stan shuddered and delivered a sharp slap across Richie's cheek before he reached down towards his cock to roughly jerk him off. The flow of his own orgasm subsided just when Richie shot off for the second time, and Stan let them have a minute to catch their breath before they repositioned. Getting comfortable after knotting was unfortunately the hardest part, but they managed, and Stan pressed more kisses to his omega. The top of his head, his neck, his cheek, and a sweet peck on the lips.

"Was it good?"

Stan hummed an affirmative. "You did great."

Richie purred at the praise and kissed his chest. One of his hands was resting on Stan's back, and it started sliding lower, not subtle in the least. Stan threw a hand behind himself to stop Richie's hand from reaching its destination. "Richie," he warned.

He tried to jerk his hand free, but Stan's grip was solid. "C'mon, Stan! Just laying here is boring."

"I'm gonna be oversensitive. At least give me a few minutes."

"Then give me something else to do for a few minutes. Wink wink." Winks which he verbalized but didn't follow through on.

Stan shut his eyes and sighed through his nose, leaning his forehead against Richie's temple. The arm of his glasses dug into the bridge of his nose a bit, but he ignored it. "Don't just verbalize the actions you're too lazy to do."

"Nag nag nag, I'm Stan, and I hate fun. I'm posing as your dad and telling you what to do."

"Beep-beep, Richie." He pressed a firm kiss to Richie's lips and pulled back.

"See! There we go! That's the Stan I know!" He dipped into a Yoda Voice, "*Beeped, I was, but mention that my father never kissed me, I must.*"

Stan leaned in like he was going to kiss him again, and instead bit his bottom lip, rolling it between his teeth. Richie jolted at the sensation and the jerk of his body caused him to pull at Stan's knot. Stan hissed and Richie groaned, not at all put off by the pain. The opposite, in fact. This invigorated Stan, who gripped roughly at Richie's sides right by his ribs. "You're such a fucking painslut, Rich."

"Too much talking, not enough painning."

Shaking his head, Stan leant in to kiss him again, while he brought his hands up to splay out over Richie's chest. He pinched at his nipples with the V of his middle and forefinger, and Richie moaned.

He needed to be careful though. If it was too much, Richie would jerk again, and Stan wasn't personally looking forward to that. He could dish out pain, but taking it was something he'd like to avoid if he could help it. "If you stay still while I tease you, when my knot deflates, I'll spank you. Deal?"

Breathless, Richie agreed, "Deal," and then pulled Stan's face back in for another kiss.

And with that, Stan was back to pinching his nipples, tugging at them and smirking as Richie shuddered next to him. He wasn't jerking, but Stan quickly had Richie grinding back on his cock, which was much preferable to what had happened earlier. There was a moment where he let himself get a feel for Richie's rhythm and then he was grinding up when Richie was grinding down.

"Fuck—"

"Shh." Stan left Richie's mouth and trailed kisses and nips down his throat until he reached his chest. Now he could lick the abused flesh, which had Richie keening and throwing his head back. Like he had with his neck gland, Stan grazed his teeth over the skin, only this time he bit down around his areola. He reveled in the way that his teeth sunk in, his rut-addled alpha brain pleased to be biting something.

Richie cursed and Stan gave another teasing nip just as his knot had deflated enough to pull out. "No! Nononono, Stan, put it back in!"

"Mm-mm," Stan denied, pulling away from Richie so that he could readjust them. He'd come enough that it had no problem leaking out like they'd both wanted, but now that he was here in the moment, Stan wanted to shove it back in and plug Richie up until it took. His jaw tightened, fully aware that Richie was on birth control and wouldn't get pregnant no matter how much he wanted it. He redirected his attention away from the offending load. "I'm supposed to spank you, remember?"

"Ye—well, but you could just, like, do it later! *Please!*" Richie was on this hands and knees now, already in position, but he was lowering his front so that his ass was in the air and his face was in the sheets

as he pleaded, the beginning of a pout, now that he'd already been denied.

Well, his glasses were definitely going to need a cleaning after all of this was over.

Stan lowered himself to Richie's level, mouth near his ear so he could speak low, "But if I spank you now, think about how much better it'll be when I fuck you. With your ass red and tender, and when I'm pressed up against you, it'll hurt all over again. Isn't that what you want, baby?"

His hands were gripping the sheets tight. "I'm not your baby," Richie mumbled, half of what was undeniably a pouty expression shoved into the mattress beneath him.

Stan raised an eyebrow. "No?"

"No. Baby is *my* nickname. Get yer own."

"Oh, right. Of course. You're my baby-love, aren't you?"

Richie flushed but smiled, "That's the ticket, Mr. Conductor." He took in a deep breath and sighed. After four continuous heats and a few sprinkled throughout their ten-year friendship prior, Stan knew he was trying to collect himself mentally. Finally, Richie pushed himself up with his hands and said, "Now let's take this train to Spankstown, whaddya say?"

"Chugga chugga—" but in place of the 'choo choo' Stan gave Richie two light smacks on the ass, which had Richie cackling. After the laughter died down, though, Stan was caressing his derriere in a firm and loaded manner. As soon as he felt the first solid cop, Richie inhaled, fully aware of the tension that was now present between them and ready to break with the first of what was sure to be a flurry of spankings to come.

"Are you still there?"

"Going."

Stan hummed, letting Richie sink into the headspace a little deeper

before he finally spanked him for the first time. His omega moaned and bit his lip, hips rocking back for the second spank that came quickly after. He watched with rapt attention as the third had Richie clenching his glutes and forcing a gush of his come out.

"Do you feel it?"

The best Richie could manage in response was a nod and a breathless huff, hands twisted into the sheets. Stan's hand strayed and a curious finger found its way to his perineum where some of it had gathered, and he rubbed at it with a few long, meaningful strokes. An aborted curse fell from Richie's mouth and he tried to get more from him, but Stan only tsked as this sent another wave out of him.

"You're making a mess." Which was the plan, but Richie liked feeling like he'd earned his spanks, and at present this was more of a bargain. He gathered some of his own come on his middle finger and shoved it back into Richie's hole like he'd wanted to, and like Richie had wanted to do earlier. Oh well. Guess that was Stan's fun to have now. He smirked as a gasp was punched out of Richie's lungs, and without missing a beat, he started moving back on Stan's finger. Benevolent as he was, he let Richie have one self-imposed thrust from it before pulling it out just as he was coming back for a second.

Richie let out a genuine whine at this, shaking his head against the sheets. "Please," he begged, voice raw and heavy with desperation.

Stan gripped his hair and jerked his head back. It wasn't something he would naturally have done, but it fit the scene, and for as many of Richie's joke as he was willing to shut down—Stan *did* like to give Richie what he wanted. He just happened to give most of those things in bed. "You lasted three spankings before you made a mess and tried to take what I wouldn't give you. I'm spanking you until you'll think twice about sitting down, and I'll fuck you when I'm ready. Stop acting like a slut."

Truthfully, he was ready now, but alongside his own need to orgasm and fill Richie up with his kids came the instinct to please his omega. An omega that currently had much more on his agenda than a sloppy, heat-dazed fuck would satisfy—no matter how much he begged for it. Richie knew how to make this stop, if he really needed

to.

He was quieter as Stan continued, only reacting to the stronger ones or hissing as the continued smacks to his ass had him flushed and tender from the abuse. Stan cupped gently at his skin once it had reached a familiar shade of red.

"Do you want more, Richie?"

Richie shook his head, "Fuck me, alpha."

And Stan would allow it. His dick had been hard for a long time now, so it was a relief to finally be able to thrust back into Richie, whose hole was sloppy with dripping slick and leftover ejaculate. His grip was immediately bruising, which had Richie crying out when it was paired with a hard thrust to start off their second round.

He fucked into him with the usual wild, uncontrolled thrusts that came with his rut; so obsessed with *fuck, fuck, fuck, fill* in an animalistic, one-track way that suited Richie's own internal drive just fine.

Richie was trembling with the effort to hold himself up, subspace and heat mingling to a near intoxicating effect in his mind. Stan wrapped an arm around his middle to hold up some of the weight, and his other hand pulled Richie's ass back to meet him just as his knot locked into place for a second time.

Filling brought him to the next logical step of mating: *biting*. Richie didn't want to be bitten anywhere that a bonding mark would take, and even for the familiar disgruntled feeling that took root knowing that yet again he would be without a bond, Stan brought his bite down on Richie's shoulder. Endorphins flooded his system just at the sensation of sinking his teeth in, and Stan's eyes fluttered closed on a moan.

Richie shuttered and came across the sheets, all the strength leaving his body at once. And yeah, shit, the muscles in Stan's arm were straining to hold him up now. Still, he stubbornly didn't want to let go where his teeth connected them.

Rationally, his jaw would get tired too, and Stan pulled away to lay them on their side for rest. Blood was welling up ever-so-slightly from the indentations left by his teeth, and Stan ran his tongue over it in solid, thorough licks to clean it up.

He ran his good arm over Richie's chest to tease at the other bite, and Richie raised his shoulder to bump at his forearm in a quiet signal to stop. Stan pulled his hand away and ran it through his hair instead.

"Tired now?"

Richie hummed an affirmative, and Stan smiled to himself. He loved Richie's loudmouth, garbage persona. Undoubtedly, he was beyond obnoxious and it wasn't always endearing—hence 'beep-beep, Richie'—but Stan loved this, too. When Richie was so fucked out that he was nonverbal and exhausted. He was quiet and pliant and perfectly spoonable, where Richie was oftentimes too hyper or distracted to lay down and let Stan hold him for long.

He maneuvered Richie's glasses off and set them aside, pressing a kiss to his temple before he ran his fingers through his hair again.

Their whole encounter thus far had been a mental checklist for Stan, whose alpha hindbrain congratulated him on thoroughly pleasing his omega. *His* pleased omega, whose breath was evening out as he fell asleep in *Stan's* arms.

He pressed his nose to Richie's neck again and took in his scent. Always much stronger during his heat, and comforting to smell because it reflected what Stan already knew by lacking the acrid tinge of discontent or fear that had plagued their childhood in Derry.

He had to stay awake long enough to pull out and clean them up. Not his favorite part of everything, but necessary.

Once everything was clean, he rummaged around in Richie's bag to find his pack of cigarettes and set it on the nightstand with a lighter for when Richie woke up.

Sex and a smoke, Stanley. One of life's greatest joys.

Stan bummed one and grabbed his own lighter out of the mesh easy-

access pocket. It was a pretty silver piece that was engraved with his initials, a birthday gift from Richie the first year that they had started dating.

Despite all my efforts, I'm shitty at gift-giving, but I figured that would be like, practical and sexy enough for you, so—

So Stan had kissed him and told him it was perfect, not holding back on a jab about what definitely was a long tradition of terrible gifts on Richies part. Now he'd just have to keep it up, since Stan knew Richie was capable of a higher standard. Richie had just looked at him with a faux-panicked wide-eyed stare before asking, *Is it too late to take that back?*

Stan chuckled lightly at the memory and made his way into the bathroom with light-footed steps. He lit up and leaned against the sink counter so he could look out the window. It was too dark to be much of a pretty scene, but the lights of the city were okay too.

He glanced at Richie's sleeping form and tilted his head back. Smoke, top everything off by brushing his teeth and then that would conclude the first wave of all of this.

The sooner it was over, though, the sooner they would move on to his least favorite ritual: Richie's after-heat/after-rut apology.

He knew Stan wanted to bond, get married and have kids. He knew the sacrificed Stan was making by dating him, and every six months when their cycles would roll around, he'd get depressed and insecure about their relationship. It got on Stan's nerves because he *knew* what he was compromising on just as well as Richie did. It just didn't matter because he loved Richie and he was devoted to him.

He... maybe hoped that Richie would change his mind on some account, but even if he didn't, Stan was alright with that. He got what he needed, and as far as kids go, he wasn't ready for them yet anyways. He was still living in an apartment and his job was fairly new. He needed to settle more parts of his adulthood before he seriously considered a family.

Stan just *knew* Richie was his endgame, the way he *knew* that Georgia

was the right direction for him professionally. More of his lifelong preternatural confidence.

There was an understanding deep within him that Richie's commitment issues were tied to low self-esteem and fear of abandonment. And really, he didn't even have commitment issues, so much as he was afraid of complicating his decision to commit. He was committed right now, he was just afraid of the divorce process, he was afraid they'd bond and he would tie Stanley down to someone who didn't deserve him. His view on children had ways come from the "the world is fucked up, why force someone into that?" perspective, but considering everything else, there was more to that as well.

Stan just needed to prove that he was in it for the long haul and Richie would come around. He wasn't going to let him self-sabotage, and Stan wasn't willingly letting him go at any point, so Richie was just going to find himself stuck with someone who loved him unconditionally and with the utmost devotion.

He wouldn't smother him with it. Richie was inevitably going to progress at his own rate. The best Stan can do is just chip away at the barrier of problems bit by bit by *being there* and showing that he meant the things he said.

Stan crushed the butt into the ashtray.

Everything happens one day at a time, Stan.